THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE

Herbert J. Sorknes
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THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE

SECOND EDITION

By

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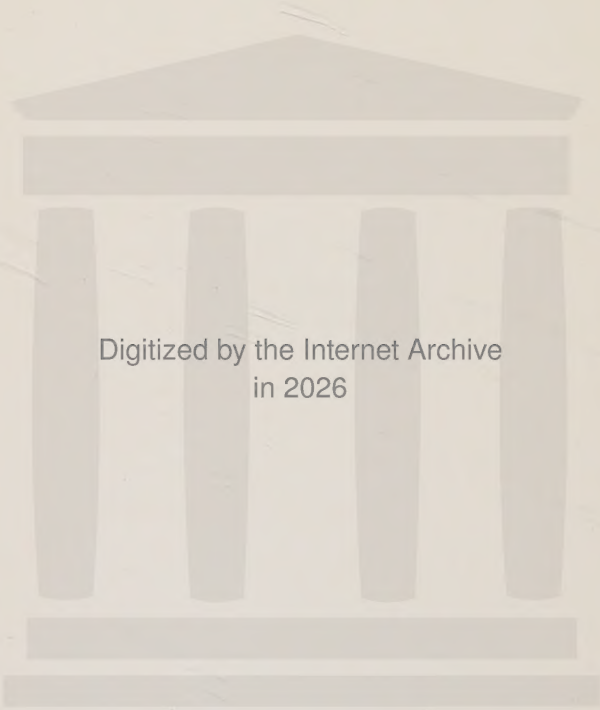
DEDICATED
TO ASPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE
WHO ARE KEEN IN THE
QUEST FOR HAPPI-
NESS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PREFATORY NOTE

The basis of this little volume is a sermon-lecture delivered at a number of young people's conventions and similar gatherings. By the request of many friends the material is here presented, in a somewhat expanded form.

I send forth this message with an earnest prayer that God may make it helpful to someone in the search for the secret of a happy life.

MARTIN HEGLAND

NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA,
SEPTEMBER 1926.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	A UNIVERSAL DESIRE . . .	5
II.	THE FOUNDATION	14
III.	A MISTAKEN VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY	23
IV.	A DIFFERENT VIEW	29
V.	THE GIFT OF GOD IN BAPTISM	34
VI.	THE WAY BACK TO GOD. . . .	40
VII.	GETTING STARTED	51
VIII.	HOW TO BE SURE	63
IX.	THE NEW LIFE OF LOVE . . .	70
X.	CONTINUED GROWTH	80
XI.	A RICH LIFE	88
XII.	WHAT OF CONFLICT AND SACRIFICE?	95
XIII.	AN HISTORIC STRUGGLE . . .	107
XIV.	WHAT IT WOULD MEAN . . .	116
XV.	A GLORIOUS PROSPECT	126

I

A Universal Desire

HAPPINESS! That which everyone seeks, but so few truly find. What is the secret? This little book aims to answer that question.

Other questions may interest a group here and a group there, but this question interests us all. For in dealing with this problem we have to do with the paramount issue of human kind. Wherever we turn, among whatever people, in whatever sphere, we meet the desire for happiness.

You, yourself, dear reader, desire to be happy. Your heart tells you

so, and your actions bear testimony to the same fact. Deep within you there is a craving for gladness — a voice crying out for certain satisfactions that will bring joy. And perhaps most of your acts are done, consciously or unconsciously, to bring you happiness.

Sometimes the happiness you seek is immediate, sometimes it lies in the distant future. You work because you are happy in your work or because the rewards of your toil will buy for you happiness — producing things. You eat because you like the taste of food when you are hungry or because you know that, if you do not take food, trouble is in store for you. You play because you love fun or because physical exercise will help to insure you against ill-health in the future. You read because you love books or because the information and

power you get thru reading and study will help to bring you success later in life. You travel for the sheer joy of the thing or because it advances you toward the satisfaction of being a cosmopolitan citizen. Always there is a search for happiness. Deep within your soul the compelling urge is continually making itself felt.

Those who love you desire your happiness. This is especially true of your parents if they are of the right kind. No true parents wish to see their children sad or troubled. They want them to be happy. To be sure, by reason of their larger experience and wisdom, they may withhold from a child something he greatly desires, but they do it in the interests of an ultimate greater good.

Your friends desire your happiness. They want to help you to have

a good time. They may sometimes be mistaken in the ways they go about it; but, if they are true friends, they want you to be truly happy.

Of the greatest importance it is, however, that God wants you to be happy. Perhaps you do not believe this. Perhaps you have an idea that God is a gloomy sort of being to whom the thought of gladness is foreign. If so, you are altogether mistaken.

But how do we know the character of God? We know Him only partially, to be sure. Nevertheless God has in many ways revealed His nature to us. Let us see what kind of a God He is.

With the very circumstance of creation there are associated God's thoughts of happiness.

"In the beginning God created the

heavens and the earth.—And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."

After having given him life, God placed man in the most ideal situation possible, surrounding him with everything that might minister to his happiness. Man spoiled this fortunate situation by his sin, but still God's thoughts were those of love and happiness. This is clearly shown in His promise to Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth

be blessed." The same thought runs thru all God's dealings with the chosen people and culminates in the sending of His own Son to earth. So great was the happiness ushered in by this event that an angel messenger came to proclaim the news: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

With entire truthfulness, therefore, Jesus could say: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The revelation of God as one who supremely desires our happiness is reinforced by the recorded experiences of men who have come to know what kind of a God He is.

David says of the Lord: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart." And again: "Let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God:

Yea, let them rejoice with gladness."

The whole of the One Hundredth Psalm is an exhortation to thanksgiving and gladness:

"Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands.

Serve Jehovah with gladness:

Come before His presence with singing.

Know ye that Jehovah, He is God:

It is He that made us, and we are His;

We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

And into His courts with praise:

Give thanks unto Him, and bless His name.

For Jehovah is good; His loving-kindness endureth for ever,

And His faithfulness unto all generations."

In that wonderful prophetic passage in the thirty-fifth chapter of his book the prophet Isaiah closes with this triumphant declaration: "And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

It was on the basis of a profound knowledge of God and His ways with men that the apostle Paul could urge upon Christians: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. — — In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and sup-

plication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

Says Cumming: "As the fountain finds its expression in overflowing, as a river is rushing to the infinite main, as trees in bursting into life and blossom in the spring-tide, so God feels it His joy to give liberally, and to give above all we ask, or think, or desire, for Christ's sake."

Plainly, then, God desires us to be happy.

II

The Foundation

TO be true and enduring, happiness must be built upon the right foundation. This statement, I believe, requires no proof. It is self-evident. Certainly a false foundation will mean ultimately the ruin of the superstructure.

But when we raise the question, "What is the right foundation for true and enduring happiness?" there may be differences of opinion. A little thinking, however, will, I believe, bring us into agreement.

Will not this contention be granted? The foundation must have to do with what is most important in

life. Certainly we are not satisfied with building on trivialities or superficialities. We want to relate the matter of our happiness to the prime values in life.

What are these? Are they those of the body? There are many who think so. Eating, drinking, sex-indulgence—oh, how many lives seem to be filled with these and nothing more. "Give me three square meals a day and a good bed to sleep in, and I ask for nothing more." Have you not heard expressions such as that?

Is this as high as your ideals go? Are you satisfied to live the life of a mere animal? To indulge your physical appetites for a few years and then die like a brute? Surely, true and enduring happiness cannot be based here.

There are higher values. There are the thrills of making money—count-

ing a day's profits, piling up a bank account, buying stocks and bonds, adding another farm, building a new house, owning a luxurious automobile, compelling recognition in the community.

There are the satisfactions of achieving work—the building of a cabinet, the construction of a machine, the gathering of a harvest, the baking of a loaf of bread, the composing of a song, the writing of a book, the finishing of a day's work well done.

There are the delights of the mind —solving a complicated problem, following out the intriguing plot of a story, experiencing the thrill of a new discovery, grasping the totality of things with a grand generalization.

There are the joys that appeal to our esthetic nature—the quivering

song of a bird, the mighty sweep of an orchestra, the idyllic charm of a landscape, the delicate colorings of a painting, the perfect lines of a statue, the stately awe of a cathedral.

There are the pleasures of social intercourse — the fellowship of the home circle, the meeting with an old friend, the stimulation of a sprightly conversation, the charm of the intimate group, the dignity of the formal reception.

All these truly belong in the category of high worth. Some will say that we have here sounded the notes of the supreme values in life. But have we? Fine, enjoyable, ennobling, and worth while as many of these things are, have we r e a c h e d the ultimate?

A voice within seems to say: There is something more. I delight in material goods, but I know also of

spiritual riches. I find satisfaction in earthly achievements, but I long for the development of character. I enjoy the delights of the mind, but I crave expression for the capacities of the soul. I am appealed to by the charm of the lovely, but I appreciate also the beauty of holiness. I am fond of the friendship of men, but I am made for fellowship with God.

Here is the judgment of the greatest appraiser of values that ever lived: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Here at last we have reached bedrock. Any evaluation of human life that leaves out religion, is partial, superficial, and basically false.

If you would have the evidence of men, listen to these:

Sabatier: "Man is incurably religious."

Theodore Parker: "The religious sentiment is the strongest and deepest element in human nature."

Henry Ward Beecher: "Religion is but the expression of man's deepest and noblest nature."

Dr. Fairbairn: "Mark!—Man is a religious being. Look to the north and south, the east and west, and what do you see? Religions. Wherever you turn—man; wherever man —religion."

Lord Kelvin: "If you think strongly enough, you will be forced by science to the belief in God, which is the foundation of all religion."

Pasteur: "Happy is he who carries a God within him—an ideal of beauty to which he is obedient—an ideal of art, an ideal of science, an ideal of

the fatherland, an ideal of the virtues of the Gospel."

Christlieb: "The soul is a never ending sigh after God."

Ruskin: "There is n e e d, bitter need, to bring back into men's minds that to live is nothing, unless to live be to know Him by whom we live."

Romanes: "I know from experience the intellectual distractions of scientific research, philosophical speculation, and artistic pleasures; but I am also well aware that even when all are taken together and well sweetened to taste, in respect of consequent reputation, means, social position, etc., the whole concoction is but as high confectionery to a starving man.—It is by God decreed that fame shall not satisfy highest need.—There is no finality to rest in, while disease and death are always standing in the background.—This whole negative

side of the subject proves a vacuum in the soul of man which nothing can fill save faith and God."

Lavater: "To speak the truth before God, who is my judge, I must confess I know not any joy that is so dear to me; that so fully satisfies the inmost desires of my mind; that so enlivens, refines, and elevates my whole nature, as that which I derive from religion, from faith in God: as one who is not only the parent of men, but has condescended, as a brother, to clothe Himself with our nature. Nothing affords me greater delight than a solid hope that I partake of His favors, and rely on His never-failing support and protection. —He who has been so often my hope, my refuge, my confidence, when I stood upon the brink of an abyss where I could not move one step forward; He who, in answer to my

prayer, has helped me when every prospect of help vanished; that God who has safely conducted me, not merely thru flowery paths, but likewise across precipices and burning sands;—may this God be thy God, thy comfort, as He has been mine."

Perhaps no one has expressed the souls' need of God better than Augustine, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

We are now perhaps ready for this double statement: Happiness, to be true and enduring, must include basically the happiness of the soul, and the happiness of the soul depends upon a right relationship with God.

What is this right relationship, and how is it brought about? These questions we shall try to answer in the pages that follow.

III

A Mistaken View of Christianity

IT is quite generally admitted in informed quarters that Christ is the greatest teacher of all time in the matter of the right relationship between God and man, and that to be a true disciple of Christ is a realization of that relationship.

But now there are sharply conflicting ideas as to what this right relationship consists in—as to what it is to be a Christian. One of these is the legalistic view. Let us try to get a clear understanding of what is meant by this conception of Christianity.

According to this view, to be a

Christian is, first, not to do certain things that are wrong. To illustrate: Looking at Christianity from the legalistic point of view, the drunkard says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit drinking." The gambler says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit gambling." The thief says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit stealing." The swearer says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit taking God's name in vain." The liar says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit telling falsehoods." The dance-mad young person, who can scarcely think of anything but dancing, says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit dancing." The unclean man says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must quit doing immoral things." The selfish person says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must cease to think always of myself." The

quick-tempered person says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must keep from losing my temper so easily." The covetous person says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must cease to desire what belongs to my neighbor."

Thus we might go thru the entire list of sins, and, looking at the matter from the legalistic standpoint, to be a Christian one must quit them all.

But that is only one side of the matter. According to the legalistic view one must also do something in order to be a Christian. The legalist says: "If I am to be a Christian, I must go to church, I must read my Bible, I must pray, I must go to communion, I must be sober, I must be honest, I must be reverent, I must be clean, I must be kind, I must do good to my fellow-men": and so on thru the entire list of Christian virtues.

Now, there is a law of conduct that, when a person has been in the habit of doing certain things, he has developed a liking for those things. Thus the drunkard has come to love his drink, the gambler his game, the thief his trade, the swearer his oaths, the liar his tales, and so on, all along the line.

On the other hand the person living in sin has developed no liking for the things of God or the Christian life. He has no desire for going to church, no love for reading the Bible, no taste for prayer, no longing for communion, no desire for the traits that belong to a Christian life.

Consequently, to be a Christian, looking at the matter from the legalistic point of view, is the most gloomy prospect imaginable. Why, it is taking out of one's life the very things that one loves and substituting things

for which one has no taste whatsoever. Many and many a young man and woman, looking at Christianity in this way, has said: "I don't want to be a Christian. It is taking the very joy out of life."

What shall we say of this legalistic view of Christianity? Is it right or wrong? There is an element of truth in it, as we shall see later, but taken as stated it is a basically wrong and false idea of what it is to be a Christian. A person might quit all the sins I have mentioned, and many others, and do all the good things I have listed, and many others, and still not be a Christian.

"What?" you say, perhaps with indignation, "Do you mean to say that to avoid doing sinful things and to engage in doing right things has nothing to do with being a Christian?"

Just let that question stand for the time being, friend. We shall come back to it later.

IV

A Different View

E have examined the legalistic view of Christianity. Let us now look at a different conception. We shall let Jesus and the apostles set it forth.

Speaking of the people as sheep to whom He would be a shepherd, Jesus said: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." That sounds altogether different from the legalistic idea, doesn't it? Again Jesus said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Again, a different note. On still another occasion Jesus spoke thus: "If ye abide in my

Word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

What marvel is this? According to His own words the life into which Jesus would lead us, is a full, free, joyous, abundant life! How can that be? How can Jesus picture the Christian life in this manner, when so many, many people think it consists of a lot of unwelcome *Do's* and *Dont's?* The secret, friends, is this, and I do not want you to miss this point: The Christian life is a gift from God, and whatever God gives He gives in fulness and abundance.

I repeat: The Christian life is a gift from God. Let us see what this statement really means.

The whole plan of salvation reveals clearly that it is God's purpose to give spiritual life to men. The wonderful *Little Gospel,* to which we

have already called attention, sums it all up very briefly: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." These are the glad tidings about which the angels sang their song of praise on that first Christmas night. The apostle John puts the matter a little more fully: "The witness (that God hath borne concerning His Son) is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Paul develops the wondrous truth still further in his letter to the Ephesians: "God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead thru our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been

saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly p l a c e s, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved thru faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory."

This is evangelical Christianity and this is the true view of that right relationship between God and man which alone can bring happiness. To be right with God, to be a true Christian is to be made alive by the power and grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Friends, get this clear: You can never in all the world make yourself a Christian by anything you do or do not do. It simply can't be done. Just as no person can give himself phys-

ical life, so no person can give himself spiritual life. If a person is ever to get spiritual life, that is, become a Christian, it must be by getting life from God. There is absolutely no other way.

In the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But being born again, one enters into fulness of life.

V

The Gift of God in Baptism

WE have tried to set forth the evangelical view as the true idea of what it is to be a Christian, and it is hoped that the reader has in his heart a yearning to enter fully into the riches of this Christian experience.

But perhaps someone is asking: How, now, practically, does one enter upon such a life?

It is my privilege to tell you, friend, that this life was begun in you by the grace of God in your Baptism. In that blessed sacrament God gave you spiritual life. He planted within you by His super-

natural power and grace the nucleus of a new being.

Do you have difficulty in believing this? Then meditate upon some words of God. First the command of Jesus: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20.)

Notice the necessity of Baptism for getting the new life. Jesus says, and makes it emphatic: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh

is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6.)

Paul says: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27.)

And again: "According to His mercy He saved us, thru the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly, thru Jesus Christ our Savior; that, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 5:5-7.)

Peter, too, says: "Baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21.)

Do not forget, what we have emphasized before, that spiritual life is a gift from God. Do you question God's ability or willingness to give such life to a child? Oh, whence such unworthy views of the character of God? Pray, to whom can God give

His gift of life as easily as to an unresisting child?

Remember what Jesus said about grown-ups and children in relation to the Kingdom: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

An ancient Church Father on being asked what he regarded as the greatest day in his life, answered without hesitation that it was the day he was baptized. For, he explained, on his natural birthday he was born into the natural world, but on his baptismal day he was born into the Kingdom of God.

Friend, do not cease to thank God for your Baptism. On that day God made you a new spiritual being and an heir to the estate of heaven. And fortunate are you indeed if the germinal God-life, planted in you in

Baptism, has been nourished thru the teaching, training, and example of Christian parents, teachers, and pastors, so that you have come in the years of your youth into a conscious state of life with God. Happy indeed if you have never known a time when you were not a Christian. Thank God for that with all your heart. And may there be in your soul a constant prayer to be kept in fellowship with Christ, thru whom fulness of life daily comes to you. May you also grow steadily in understanding of God's truth, in appreciation of His wonderful grace to you as a sinner, in steadfastness of love to your Savior, and in faithfulness in service to God and fellowmen.

Some of the pages that follow are not intended p r i m a r i l y for you. However, the discussion may perhaps serve to make more clear what your

relationship to God really is, and to point the way to a richer and more happy Christian life.

VI

The Way Back To God

HILE we should thank God out of full hearts for those young people who have b e e n preserved in their baptismal covenant, we must face the stern fact that there are many, ah, too many, who have drifted away from God.

If you are such a one, friend, I need not tell you that you are unhappy. Your own heart tells you that.

If you have been guilty of some base sin, your conscience gives you no rest. You may succeed in throwing off the matter from your mind at times, but the disturbing

thought of your guilt comes back to you, especially in moments when you are alone.

More likely, however, you have not been guilty of any sin particularly great in the judgment of men. You are simply living a thoughtless life away from God, sometimes throwing yourself wildly into worldly amusements and believing that you are having a good time.

Perhaps you belong to the class of those, who while they do not find any satisfaction in sin or worldly amusements, do not see anything particularly attractive in being a Christian.

Or, perchance, you are one of those who want to be a real Christian but somehow don't know how.

Whatever your situation is, may God make plain to you the way back

into the joy of a saving fellowship with Him.

Perhaps there is no better method of setting forth that way than to point to the word spoken by the Lord in the ancient book of Proverbs: "My son, give me thine heart."

Now, what does that mean? What does God want with a person's heart? He wants to do two things with it. And here we get back to the problem of sins and good deeds which we left unsolved at the close of our discussion about legalistic Christianity.

To illustrate the first thing that God wants to do with a man's heart, I want to tell a little story that I came across some years ago.

A little boy came home from Sunday School one day with this verse from Proverbs as his golden text to memorize for the following Sunday: "My son, give me thine heart." He

went to his father and said: "I don't understand this verse, father. Won't you explain it to me?"

Now, this father was a wise father who wanted the boy to do a little thinking by himself. So he said: "You think about it, my boy, till tomorrow."

As the boy was going, the father added: "By the way, you have a little pocketbook, haven't you? Would you mind giving it to me?" The boy, somewhat surprised, reached down into his pocket for the purse and gave it to his father. Then he ran about his play.

The next day he came again to his father to get light on that golden text. But before explaining it the father asked: "My boy, why do you suppose I asked you for your pocketbook yesterday?"

"Oh," answered the son, "I thought

perhaps you wanted to put something into it."

"You are right," said the father. "So I have. Here it is. And now, I think you understand what God means when He says: 'My son, give me thine heart.' He wants to put something into it."

Yes, friends, that is the first thing God wants to do with the heart given to Him. And what is it He wants to put into the heart? Listen now: God wants to put into a sinner's heart a new love—a love for Himself and everything that belongs to Him; a love for His Kingdom, a love for His Church, a love for His Word, a love for His service, a love for fellow Christians, a love for all men, a love for everything that is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.

And in planting the principle of

this new love in the heart, God does the second thing with it. He takes something out of it. What does he take out? Now, listen again: God takes out of the heart the love for things that are wrong. From the heart of the drunkard God takes away the love of drink; from the heart of the gambler He takes away the love of the game; from the heart of the thief, the love of theft; from the heart of the swearer, the love of oaths; from the heart of the liar, the love of tales. In short, He takes away the love of sin in every form.

God does not trim off a little here and a little there from the corrupt tree of sin rooted in the evil heart, as the legalist tries to do. God reaches down into the depths of the human being and pulls sin out by the roots. That's the only cure for sin.

When God has been permitted to

do these two things with a human heart—planted within it a new love for Him and taken out the old love for sin—behold, a miracle has been wrought! The man is born again. He is a new creature. The old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. Truly it is a work of God, and it is marvelous in our eyes!

The miracle does not always take place in a moment. Sometimes it does in sudden conversions, but oftentimes the process covers months and years.

In any case the work of God continues in the process of sanctification —becoming more and more recreated into God's holy image. As the new love grows, the old love dies. A man came to his pastor once troubled by the fact that some of his old sins were clinging to him in spite of his

efforts to get rid of them. His pastor pointed to some oak leaves clinging to the branches even thru the winter months, and commented: "Those leaves hang on in spite of the cold and the stormy winds. But when the warmth of spring causes the sap to flow and the new shoots to come forth, the old leaves drop off of themselves."

A striking parable. When the power of God gives progressively expanding life to the soul, the evidences of the old life fall away. The more one comes to love God, the less he loves gold; the more one comes to love the Savior, the less he loves self; the more one comes to love the Word, the less he loves the world; the more one comes to love the house of the Lord, the less he loves the den of lewdness. The whole process strikingly illustrates what someone has

called "the expulsive power of a new affection."

To be sure, the new love never completely fills the heart, nor is the old love entirely rooted out during life. This p e r f e c t consummation takes place only upon the death of the Christian, when he passes on out of the conflict of earth to the triumph of heaven. But as the Christian continues to walk with God, feeds his soul upon the bread that has come down from heaven, and is not disobedient to the heavenly vision, the new love grows and the old love dies. The new principle is constantly at work.

Such a change from the old to the new wrought out in the experience of an ambitious young student prompted the writing of the following lines:

I had walked life's way with an easy tread,

Had followed where comforts and pleasures led
Until one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for my goal,
Much thought for the body but none for the soul,
I had entered to win in life's big race,
When I met the Master face to face.

I had built my castles and reared them high,
With their towers had pierced the blue of the sky.
I had sworn to rule with an iron mace,
When I met the Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him and blushed to see

That His eyes full of sorrow were
fixed on me.
I faltered and fell at his feet that
day,
While my castles melted and van-
ished away.
Melted and vanished and in their
place
Naught else did I see but the Mas-
ter's face.

And I cried aloud, "Oh, make me
meet
To follow the steps of Thy wounded
feet."
My thought is now for the souls of
men.
I have lost my life to find it
again—
E'er since that day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

VII

Getting Started

UT just how does God plant the new love in a human heart? To try to understand this, so far as a supernatural work of God can be grasped, let us look at one of the parables of Jesus: "The Pharisee and the Publican."

These two men went up to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee lifted up his hands and his eyes to heaven and began to tell God how fine a man he was and how many good works he had performed. He had done things even beyond what the Law required. He didn't have a thing to pray for. Read the parable

(Luke 18:10-14), and you will find that there is not a single petition in the recorded remarks of the Pharisee. Why, he was so perfectly satisfied with himself, that he didn't have any thing to ask for. He was a legalist.

The poor publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes toward heaven, but smote his breast and, I tell you, he prayed. Just a short prayer, but tremendously in earnest: "God, be Thou merciful to me, a sinner."

What does Jesus say of these two men? "I say unto you: This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." What does that mean? It means that the publican went home a child of God, with his sins forgiven, standing in the sight of God just and righteous as if he had never sinned at all. He was a saved man. But the self-righteous

Pharisee carried all his sins back with him.

The experience of the publican tells how to get started in the evangelical Christian life. Apply it to yourself.

You have sin. You know it. You are not as thoroly aware of your sins as you might be, but your conscience tells you that you are not right in the sight of God. How would you like to have all your secret deeds, thoughts, and desires thrown on a screen for everyone to see? Oh, I think you would want the mountains to fall on you and cover you!

Remember, God sees everything. And if you really want to know something of how you appear in the eyes of God, look at yourself in the mirror of God's Law. Take the

commandments one by one and test yourself.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. That is, we should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Do you do that? Once there came to Jesus a young man who thought he had kept all the commandments from his youth up. One single remark of Jesus showed him that he was worshipping money instead of God. He had not begun to keep the First Commandment. Have you ever misused God's name or desecrated the Lord's Day? Have you ever been disobedient to father or mother? Have you ever had an unkind or an impure thought? Have you ever taken anything that wasn't yours? Have you always been perfectly truthful? Have you ever coveted your neighbor's fine house or his elegant car?

Can you stand before God and say: "I am perfectly sinless?" What if death should suddenly summon you to face your Maker? Are you ready? Oh, how well I know that if you have not gotten rid of your sins, you are terribly afraid to die. And well you may be, for it is a fearful thing for a sinner to fall into the hands of the living God. This is not a pleasant statement, but it was made by God's own servant (Hebr. 10:31.)

And there are other sober statements in God's Word setting forth His judgment upon sin.

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23.)

"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the Law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10.)

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3.)

Now, friend, why go about with judgment upon sin hanging over you and with fear in your heart when God is so eager to take them both away? Why carry the heavy burden of your sins, when God stands ever ready to pardon and forgive? The door of the Father's house is wide open, and God stands with open arms to receive you if you will but come.

"But," perhaps you say, "How is that? I thought God was angry with me because of my sin."

Listen, friend, to these glorious messages: "When the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem them that were under the Law" (Gal. 4:4-5.)

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is

everyone that hangeth upon a tree" (Gal. 3:13.)

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19.)

"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2.)

"Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19.)

"In whom (Christ) we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14.)

"The blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7.)

What do all these wonderful passages mean? They mean that God in

the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, has become our substitute working out a complete righteousness for us with His holy life and paying the penalty for sin by His precious death upon the cross. And if we come to God, not presenting our own merits, but pleading the merits of Jesus Christ, we shall receive a full forgiveness of all our sins and be credited with a perfect righteousness in the sight of God.

That is why there may be proclaimed to all sinners everywhere: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Now, then, friend, will you not come to the throne of grace just as you are, confess your sins, and plead for pardon in Christ's name? Remember, forgiveness of sins is not dependent on your efforts. Becoming a Christian does not depend on

your getting to be so and so good beforehand. You can never become a Christian by what you do or do not do. The legalistic way simply doesn't work. Try the publican's way, the evangelical way.

The work of redeeming you was finished some nineteen hundred years ago when Christ died upon the cross. What remains is for you to receive thru faith the fruits of that redemptive work. Christ graciously invites you: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And he adds a reassuring promise: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Why not accept this loving invitation?

I know, dear friend, from bitter experience that a person is not happy as long as he keeps his sins to himself and does not confess them to God and

ask for pardon. I know also that the experience of the greatest joy lies in knowing that one's sins are all forgiven.

May this be your confession:

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin would not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

And, friend, will you not right now make a beginning, and from the heart pray this prayer:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to
Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse
each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, tho tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt w e l c o m e, pardon, cleanse,
relieve;
Because Thy promise, I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

VIII

How To Be Sure

BUT perhaps the question comes into your mind: "How may I be sure that God has forgiven me my sins, and that I am His child?" In answer I would ask you to go back and meditate again on the many passages from God's Word that we just considered. These deal with the sure basis of our faith in the forgiveness of sins.

It was because of the redemptive work of Christ that John could point men to Christ and say: "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." And because of this same work God extends the

gracious offer: "Tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Do you not believe that God means what He says? Do you not believe that He is truthful and reliable? I want to say in all earnestness, friend, that you are doing a great injustice to God and an incalculable wrong to yourself by doubting these words of God.

Suppose a prisoner has been charged with a certain crime and has been condemned to die. The day of his execution has come. As preparations are being made a messenger comes in haste with a letter of pardon from the governor. What would you think if the prisoner should say: "I don't believe the governor's words, and I am going to go to my death." The message might seem too good to be

true, but if the man is normal, he will seize upon the governor's pardon with the utmost eagerness.

The message of God's pardon to us, thru Christ, may indeed seem too good to be true; but certainly we are foolish indeed not to accept it when He has repeatedly assured us of its genuineness.

There is one word of God that, it seems to me, has been given especially for such souls who have difficulty in being assured of their pardon.

It is that written by John in his First Epistle (1:8-9): "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This passage tells us plainly that we all have sin and that we fool ourselves if we try to make out that

we are holy. But it also gives us full assurance that there is a complete forgiveness, if we confess our sins.

On what is this assurance based? On God's faithfulness and justice.

The quality of faithfulness in God assures us that He will stand by the many promises we have noted and fulfill them to the last letter. You need never question the ability or willingness of God to make good His Word.

But what of the justice of God? Does not that suggest punishment of the guilty sinner rather than pardon? No, and for this reason. God's justice guarantees that He will not require the penalty of sin to be paid twice. It has been paid once by the Lord Jesus when He died upon the cross. "He offered up sacrifice for the sins of the people once for all, when He offered up H i m s e l f"

(Hebr. 7:27.) This sacrifice by Jesus God accepts in full payment of your sin penalty, and will not require you, as a repentant sinner, to pay it a second time, because He is a just God.

So on the ground of Christ's redemptive work and the many definite promises of God the repentant sinner may confidently believe the full forgiveness of all his sins. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:1-2.) Glorious truth!

If you would still have a word to help your faith, read Isaiah 53:5 this way: *He* was wounded for *my* transgressions, *He* was bruised for *my* iniquities; the chastisement of *my* peace was upon *Him;* and with *His* striped *I* am healed.

Of course God does not and cannot force pardon on a person if he doesn't want it. It must be accepted by faith. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16.) "He that believeth on Him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18.) These are Jesus' own statements. Where there is faith, there is pardon and salvation. *Whosoever,* we are told in John 3:16, believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Here is the situation, friend: God loves you. In spite of your sin and disobedience God desires your happiness. He has sent His only Son to die for you. He tells you in His Word that the redemptive work is finished. His Spirit pleads with you

to accept the salvation prepared for you. Now, is it reasonable that God would do all this and then refuse pardon when you came to ask for it? Oh, He is far more willing to forgive than you are to ask forgiveness. How basely you think of God if you doubt Him!

Friend, throw all doubts aside. Take God at His word: Make this your trusting prayer:

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine;
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

IX

The New Life of Love

IF you have sincerely prayed the penitent's prayer, you can sing the believer's song:

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank

Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till traveling days are done.

Now, do you not think that God has planted a new love in your heart? When you call to mind how God loves you and all that He has done for you; when you remember the cruel suffering and death of Jesus for your sake; when you remind yourself of how patiently the Spirit has dealt with you, calling you again and again

to come back into the open arms of your Heavenly Father; and now when you may know assuredly that as a repentant and believing soul you have a full forgiveness of all your sins, that you are a child of God, an heir to heaven; when you think of all this, is there not a hearty response of affection and devotion to God?

Perhaps you do not feel it as deeply as you think you should. A girl came to her teacher in Sunday School asking: "May I speak with you a moment?"

Her teacher noticed that she looked troubled about something and, taking the girl by the hand, said: "Certainly, my child, what is on your heart?"

"Oh," replied the girl, with trembling voice and tear-filled eyes, "It is a terrible thing—I do not love Jesus."

"And how can you come to love Him?"

"That is just what I do not know. I thought perhaps you would tell me."

"I shall try to fulfill your wish," said the teacher. "You know that the apostle John says: 'We love Him, because He first loved us.' Now, as you go home, say to yourself again and again: 'Jesus loves me,' and I believe that tomorrow you will be able to say: 'I love Jesus'."

The child looked up thru her tears and spoke the words: "Jesus loves me." On her way home she began to repeat the words and to think about them. The voluntary humiliation of Jesus, His sacrificial life, His suffering and death stood out clearly before her mind. "And all this," she said to herself, "He did for me." She realized how greatly Jesus loved

her, and an answering love began to fill her heart. The next evening she came again, and placing both her hands in those of her teacher, she said with a happy smile: "Now I love Jesus, because He loved me first."

Oh, how different it is to be this kind of a Christian instead of a legalist trying to live as a Christian without having one's heart in it. There are many, many such legalists—trying to go to church merely as a religious duty, trying to read their Bibles, trying to pray, trying to teach in Sunday School, trying to sing in the choir, trying to speak in the young people's society, trying to do right, sometimes going to communion, all without any real love to God in their hearts. Oh, what a joyless, spiritless, cold, formal, external, unsatisfactory performance it all is!

And always a hankering for the

things of the world, trying to go just as far in worldliness and doubtful amusements as it is possible to go, and still retain the semblance of being a Christian.

Friend, if you try to be a Christian without love to God, you will never be happy. If you try to give God your lips, or feet, or hands, without giving Him your heart, there will be no joy in your service. A divided life is a miserable failure.

But when you have given your heart to God, and He has planted within it the new love and driven out the old, then how happy you are to give Him your lips to sing and speak His praise, how happy to give Him your feet to walk in the way of truth and righteousness, how happy to give Him your hands to work for Him! For now you belong to God. You have given Him the control of the

center of your being. Your body, your mind, your soul, your talents, your time, your money, your life, your everything—all are His to be spent in His worship and service. This is the life in evangelical freedom. This is the abundant life. This is the secret of a happy life.

Oh, what a different outlook on things such an experience gives. Consider the question of amusements. How often do we not hear young people ask: "Can I dance and be a Christian? Can I play cards and be a Christian? Can I do this and that and be a Christian?" Friend, if God has been permitted to plant the new love in your heart, there will not be so many questions. The true Christian moves in a realm of freedom. He is, in a sense, "a law unto himself." "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." If a thing is

sinful, the love for it is gone from the heart of the Christian. He cares for it no longer. If a thing is doubtful, he will still be governed by his love to God and to fellowmen. Just to show how evangelical freedom acts in the presence of the question of participating in something doubtful, I shall set down here three principles stated by others: 1. How will my participation affect my own life? 2. How will my participation affect the lives of others? 3. What would Jesus have me do?

The application of these principles may be regarded as a pretty safe guide for conduct in an evangelical Christian life. Christ's love for you and your answering love to Him and to your fellowmen will be your guiding star.

In the new life of love gratitude is the dominant note. Life will be

lived in the spirit of the appreciative Christian, who wrote:

Thy life was given for me,
Thy precious blood was shed;
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
Thy life was given for me:
What have I given for Thee?

Long years were spent for me
In weariness and woe,
That thru eternity
Thy glory I might know.
Long years were spent for me:
Have I spent one for Thee?

Thy Father's home of light,
Thy rainbow-circled throne,
Were left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone.
Yea, all was left for me:
Have I left aught for Thee?

And Thou hast brought to me,
Down from Thy home above,
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love.
Great gifts Thou broughtest me:
What have I brought to Thee?

O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent,
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy and suffering blent!
Thou gavest Thyself for me;
I give myself for Thee.

X

Continued Growth

IT is not enough to begin aright the Christian life. God's thought for us is that there should be continued growth. And He has made ample provision for p r o g r e s s in Christian thinking, living, and doing. If you would continue as a happy Christian, make diligent use of these means.

Remember your Baptism. Enter deeply into the precious truth that by that sacrament you were grafted into the living body of Christ and became a participant in all the blessings He has purchased for you.

Let your understanding of and

your love for God's Word grow by constant use. It will open up to you each day unexpected riches that will gladden your soul, strengthen your faith, and equip you for efficient service.

Cultivate the prayer life. Live in the spirit of prayer. With the coming of each new day let praises burst forth from your heart to the Giver of all good and perfect gifts. Take God with you into your work, communing with Him while your hands are busy. Try to find some time and place when you can be alone with your Savior, with nothing to disturb the loving fellowship. And when e v e n i n g comes, go to your rest with a trusting prayer for forgiveness for any wrongs you may have committed, with the peaceful assurance that you are your Father's child, and with the quieting consciousness that you are

safe in the arms of your Good Shepherd.

The Lord meets you in a special way in His house. There in the company of fellow-Christians you may join in exalting God by songs of praise, in seeking His blessings thru prayer, and in listening to the words of life, guidance, and instruction spoken by His servant. It is good and necessary for Christians to come together in the Lord's house.

Make use of the gracious privilege offered you at the Lord's table. In His loving thoughtfulness Jesus arranged this s a c r a m e n t for the strengthening of believers. In the sacramental communion H e gives His very self to you and the forgiveness of sins bought for you with His precious b l o o d. By participation your faith, your assurance, your love will continue to grow strong.

Choose your friends among Christians. You need the encouragement and reinforcement that such fellowship gives.

Come right out in your Christian life. Do not hesitate to let the world know where you stand. Remember what Jesus said: "Everyone who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33.)

And this is the way Paul puts it: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto s a l v a t i o n" (Rom. 10:9-10.)

Oh, how the fear of men has paralyzed and stunted many a promising Christian life! No fear-bound life can ever prosper. So, friend, if you would have growth in power, come out into the open.

Engage actively in some form of Christian service. Offer your services in the choir, in the school of religion, in the young people's society, in visiting the sick and aged, in benevolence, or in some other form of Christian activity which the community requires.

And if you feel in your heart that the Lord is calling you to full time service in the capacity of a pastor, a deaconess, a Christian teacher, a missionary, or other Christian worker, be obedient to the vision. You will never be able to retain joy and peace in your soul if you do not heed the Lord's call. Happiest of all are

those Christians who are thoroly surrendered to God's will and have daily the assurance of His guidance and strength in their work.

There are two things necessary to growth and development of any living being. These are food and exercise. If you would grow and develop in your Christian life, and if you would have it increase in joy and satisfaction, feed your soul abundantly with the Bread that has come down from Heaven, and exercise yourself in fruitful service.

The whole secret of continued growth may be summed up in the one expression—"Abiding in Christ." Here are some of the significant things Jesus says about that: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine,

ye are the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:4-7.)

If you would continue to be a happy Christian, let Christ be the center of your life. That was what He was to Paul, as revealed by the striking words: "For me to live is Christ." Happy indeed are you if with all your heart you can say:

Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus
Can my heartfelt longing still;
See, I pledge myself to Jesus,
What He wills, alone to will.

For my heart, which He hath filled,
Ever cries: Lord, as Thou wilt.

One there is for whom I'm living,
Whom I love most tenderly;
Jesus, unto whom I'm giving,
What in love He gave to me.
Jesus' blood hides all my guilt;
Lead me, Lord, then, as Thou wilt.

Seems a thing to me a treasure,
Which displeasing is to Thee,
Then remove such dangerous pleasure;
Give instead what profits me.
Let my heart by Thee be stilled,
Make me Thine, Lord, as Thou wilt.

Grant that I may e'er endeavor
Thy good pleasure to fulfill,
In me, thru me, with me ever,
Lord, accomplish Thou Thy will.
Let me die, Lord, on Thee built,
When, and where, and as Thou wilt.

XI

A Rich Life

THE evangelical Christian life is a rich life. Many think otherwise. They seem to believe that the Christian life consists merely of a set of denials, of narrow views, of limited interests, of withdrawal from the great concerns of humanity. That is because some Christians and many non-Christians have a totally wrong conception of what Christianity is. The life of the Christian is neither that of the ascetic nor of the hermit. These conceptions are essentially subtle forms of legalism—doing something, or not doing something, in order to please God.

The true Christian life is "not a life of subtraction but of addition."

Why is the true Christian life a rich life? Because Christianity gives the right idea of God—a Creator, a Sustainer, a Savior, a Guide, a Comforter, an eternal Friend.

It gives the right idea of relationship to God—that of a child to a heavenly Father.

It gives the right idea of God's gifts to men. Good food, proper clothes, a comfortable home, right amusements are from God. The comradeship of friends, the love of lovers, the lure of books, the beauties of art, the thrills of success, the revelations of God, the inspiration of ideals, the exhilaration of spirit may all be received as coming from the Giver of all good and perfect gifts.

Christianity gives the right idea of

life—a willing and joyful service to God and fellowmen.

It gives the right idea of history—a working out of God's great plan for the race.

It gives the right idea of human destiny—an eternal fellowship with God in the new heavens and the new earth.

The Christian life is a rich life for the young person, furnishing him with the highest ideals and supplying him with the motive power from above to strive for their attainment.

It is a rich life for the student, enabling him to think God's thoughts after Him as they are revealed in nature and in history, to look at the great problems of the mind in the light of God, to engage in the search for truth that shall set him free.

It is a rich life for the mother in the home, enabling her to see her task

as mother and home-maker in the light of an exalted mission from God, one of eternal significance—a building on earth of a bit of heaven.

It is a rich life for the business or professional man, calling him to use the full powers of his manhood in providing for a home, helping to increase the world's wealth for beneficent purposes, ministering to human needs in a thousand ways, and glorifying God by his service.

It is a rich life for old age, bringing increasing appreciation of the goodness, wisdom, and mercy of God, and supplying the blessed hope of an eternal life of such glory as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered the imagination of any man.

Remember, Jesus and the apostles speak of the life with God as a life of joy, freedom, and abundance. "Godliness is profitable for all things,

having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

What greater assurance of a rich life could you desire than the beautiful words of Jesus in that immortal discourse: "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solo-

mon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the G e n t i l e s seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6: 25-33.)

The psalmist of old summed it all up in that poetic gem with which the Jewish psalter opens:

Blessed is the man that walketh not
in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,

Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers;
But his delight is in the Law of Jehovah;
And on His Law doth he meditate day and night.
And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
The wicked are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous;
But the way of the wicked shall perish.

XII

What of Conflict and Sacrifice?

BUT did not Jesus say: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me?" How does that harmonize with a happy life in freedom?

The apostle Paul has answered that question. Read carefully what he says in the following words, from his letter to the Romans: "For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the Law that it is good.

So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the Law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God thru Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of my-

self with the mind, indeed, serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak thru the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God,

neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies thru His Spirit that dwelleth in you. So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage

again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 7: 14-8:17.)

Paul here clearly shows that there is a deadly combat going on in the Christian's life. What is the reason for this conflict? It is caused by the remnant of the old nature in us —the old love for wrong things that has not been completely removed from the heart. The "old man" in us dies hard; and the Devil, who works thru this old nature, is not ready to let the soul escape out of his power without a struggle. He fights to the last to hold or regain

control of our thoughts, desires, words, deeds, our life.

Sometimes the enemies of the soul gain a temporary victory, and the Christian finds that he has fallen back into the old ways. Oh, how painful are these times of defeat and guilt and shame!

But the true Christian does not remain in this state of defeat. As soon as he realizes that he has sinned, he hastens to the throne of mercy to plead for forgiveness. The Devil tries his best to discourage him from so doing, but how rich in grace is the heavenly Father to a repentant soul coming in Jesus' name; how willing He is to forgive and receive His erring child back into fellowship!

Such an experience puts the Christian on his guard more keenly than ever before. The next time

temptation presents itself, the pain of the former defeat and the thought of what Christ has done for him urge him to send up to God a prayer for power to resist. And with such prayer comes victory.

The Arabs have a belief that a victorious warrior absorbs the strength of his conquered foe. A curious idea, but in the spiritual realm something like that takes place. For every battle won in the realm of the spirit, the Christian is by that much the stronger.

By reason of the presence of the old nature along with the new nature in the Christian's soul there is conflict, to be sure. But if we have received the true evangelical life which God gives, we shall not live a life of defeat but of victory. Paul, who speaks of confiict, has also uttered some magnificent words of vic-

tory: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

And then this triumphant shout: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

'For thy sake we are killed all the day long;

We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors thru Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-39.)

And what of sacrifice in being a

Christian? The sacrifice is essentially for the "old man" in us, who does not love God and does not wish to serve Him. By virtue of the new man in us we love God and desire to do His will. It is no sacrifice to do so. Surely there is no hardship in doing things for a person one loves!

The trouble with many people, who are Christians in name and not in heart, is that they do not love God. They are altogether of the nature of the "old man." The "new man" has not been born within them, and, therefore, everything connected with Christianity is up-hill work. To be a Christian is all sacrifice for such. But in the true Christian's life to do God's will is a sacrifice only for that part of us which is tied up to the old love. For the new nature, obedience is a real delight.

To be sure, there is another sense

in which Christians are called upon to sacrifice—in suffering persecution because of Christ. The story of martyrdom in the history of Christianity is one to stir the heart to its very depths. Often the persecution comes in more subtle form. But in whatever form it comes, the true evangelical Christian meets it with the attitude that to be a Christian is a privilege so wonderful that it is worth far more than whatever it may cost. Rather than deny Christ and lose the fellowship of the Author of his salvation, the Christian is willing to endure all things, even death in the most cruel forms.

Conflict there is in the Christian life, and sacrifice too. But oh, how blessed to be an evangelical Christian—to know God, to love God, to serve God, to be His child, to have the assurance that He is the Lord of

the universe and that one is safe in His hands. With Him there is victory in conflict, strength to endure in the midst of persecution, and a glorious hope in the very presence of death.

A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty shield and weapon;
Our help is He in all our need,
Our stay, whate'er doth happen;
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe:
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;
On earth is not his equal.

Stood we alone in our own might,
Our striving would be losing;
For us the one true Man doth fight,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Who is this chosen One?
'Tis Jesus Christ, the Son,
The Lord of hosts, 'tis He

Who wins the victory
In every field of battle.

And were the world with devils filled,
All watching to devour us,
Our souls to fear we need not yield,
They cannot overpower us;
Their dreaded prince no more
Can harm us as of yore;
His rage we can endure;
For lo! his doom is sure,
A word shall overthrow him.

Still must they leave God's Word its
might,
For which no thanks they merit;
Still is He with us in the fight,
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And should they, in the strife,
Take kindred, goods, and life,
We freely let them go,
They profit not the foe;
With us remains the Kingdom.

XIII

An Historic Struggle

IT seems very, very difficult for us human beings to hold before us consistently the evangelical conception of Christianity. There is always present with us such a strong tendency to slip over into legalism.

The whole history of Christianity is marked by the struggle between evangelical Christianity and legalism.

That was the problem Jesus faced in His contact with the Pharisees. They were legalists. They held that the life with God consisted in certain rites and performances — observing certain hours of prayer, fasting, tith-

ing, Levitical cleansings, sacrifices, Sabbath observance, and so on. So completely had they bound up the human being with man-made rules and regulations, that Jesus seems to have been under the compulsion of taking hold of this legalistic texture and tearing it to pieces in order to set the soul of man free. For that reason, among others, they hated Him and put Him to death.

Paul faced the same problem with the Judaizers within the early church. Some of these Jewish converts to Christianity could not quite grasp the full meaning of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, and liberty in Christ. Paul had an enormous task on his hands to convince them that they were no longer under the Law but under grace. He wrote those two great letters, Romans and Galatians, espe-

cially to set forth clearly those blessed evangelical doctrines that man is saved not by works but by faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and that, living this life of faith, he is free from the Law.

The struggle is illustrated again in the case of Luther. As a young man Luther was sincerely seeking peace with God. The Church, in effect, referred him to certain works that he must perform and, if he would make his salvation sure, told him to enter a monastery. Luther did become a monk, and if ever there was an exemplary monk, Luther was such a one. But peace did not come. He prayed, he fasted, he begged, but peace would not come. He went at the matter of trying to please God so earnestly, that as a result of the privations and chastisement to which he subjected himself, he was found

one day almost dead on the cold stone floor of his cell, but yet peace would not come.

Finally a spiritual adviser referred him to the Third Article of the Creed, "I believe the forgiveness of sins." To begin with Luther could scarcely believe the words. What, did he not have to do something to get peace with God? Could he simply believe that his sins were forgiven because of what Jesus had done for him?

When the meaning of this wonderful truth even partially dawned upon him, peace, for the first time, entered his soul. And when thru much Bible study and meditation he grasped the fuller meaning of the evangelical doctrine, his soul was filled with a joy so great that he couldn't keep it to himself. That which had brought such peace and

joy to himself, he must communicate to others. He had to become the Reformer. The great principle of the Reformation, "Justification by Faith," was first wrought out in Luther's own experience. As some historian has put it: "The Reformation was Luther's spiritual biography writ large."

Thus was evangelical Christianity restored to the world. But today in the Protestant Church we are facing the problem all over again. As far as this point is concerned, what is "modernism" but a form of legalism, salvation by man's own efforts. Notice some of the watchwords: "Salvation by Character," "Salvation thru Service." To many "moderns" Christ is but a helpful memory, a stimulating idea, a teacher of ethics. The essence of their Christianity is to do good to

their fellowmen. Their gospel is a purely social gospel.

Redemption from sin by the substitutionary offering of Christ, regeneration of the heart by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, the resulting love of God as the motive power for love to our fellowmen — such propositions are by many "moderns" relegated to the scrap-pile of discarded superstitions. They say the old method of individual regeneration is too slow, and, furthermore, it is not necessary. They say man is naturally good. Surround him with an environment that will call out the best there is in him, and that is all he needs to realize his destiny.

It is clear that we are here face to face with a view of Christ and His program radically conflicting with that evangelical Christianity which is revealed in God's inspired Word. If

there is any one truth above others that a right study of the Scriptures yields, it is this, that man needs to be saved by the supernatural acts of a triune God. Humanity needs not only a reformer, but a Redeemer; not only a model, but a motor. The world needs, and needs desperately, a divine Savior, a redeeming, a regenerating, a life-giving Christ.

So, today, again evangelical Christianity must gird itself for a mighty combat with a sublimated legalism.

But within the Lutheran Church, which has steadfastly held to the principles of the Reformation and has preached from its pulpits so persistently salvation by grace alone, surely there is no legalism to conflict with evangelical Christianity?

Oh, friends, I fear there is so much works-righteousness that we would be appalled if we could see its

full extent. How many souls are there not who are trying to "live right" without ever having experienced the regenerating grace of God in their hearts? How many are there not who are resting their case upon the fact that they have been baptized and confirmed, that they go to church and communion? How many struggling souls are there not who are laboring under the misconception that much prayer, Bible-reading, and efforts at self-improvement will bring them into the right relationship with God? All slaves under the Law without peace or joy or power in their lives?

Why is it so hard for us to hold steadily to evangelical Christianity and so easy to fall in line with the legalistic program? There may be many reasons, but there is one which is very easy to detect, and that

is our own pride. Oh, we like to think well of ourselves, and that we are able by our own efforts to do something pleasing in the sight of God. We do not like to bend the knee, confess ourselves helpless sinners, and plead for pardon. But God cannot save us as long as we, in a spirit of self-sufficiency, insist on trying to save ourselves. Strange as it may seem, we must come to an acknowledgment of the complete failure of our own efforts, before we are willing to accept the gift of life from God—before we can enter upon the evangelical way.

XIV

What It Would Mean

AVE you ever stopped to consider what it would mean if the rank and file of Christians were possessed of the true evangelical life?

Consider what joy and enthusiasm there would be among them. It is truly refreshing to read the accounts of the first Christian Church: "And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those who were saved."

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need." These people were living in the atmosphere of the first truly evangelical community.

Consider what it would mean for personal holiness. The thought of the enormity of sin and of the awful price paid by Jesus for redemption from

it develops, under the schooling of the Holy Spirit, a profound hatred of sin in all its forms and engenders an urge to grow more and more into the image of the Sinless One.

Consider what it would mean for righteousness among men. Buoyed up by a compelling love to his God and Savior, the evangelical Christian accepts the proposition that all other men are objects of God's love and grace, and he proceeds to deal with them in the spirit of the Golden Rule. Master and servant, employer and employee, capital and labor can then live and work together in harmony and prosperity, building safely the foundations of an enduring economic and social order.

Consider what it would mean for Christian service. Love to God is organically associated with love to men. The evangelical Christian accepts at

its full value the statement of Jesus: "Whatsoever ye have done to the least of these little ones, ye have done it unto me." So, looking away from self, he welcomes and seeks out opportunity for giving the thirsty a drink of cold water, for feeding the hungry, clothing the destitute, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, fathering the orphans, helping the widows, caring for the aged, educating the ignorant, befriending the outcasts, seeking the straying, striving to bring some joy into the lives of the blind, deaf, crippled, and unfortunates of every kind.

Consider what it would mean for stewardship. Accepting all things that one possesses as a gift from God and acknowledging oneself an eternal debtor by reason of God's boundless grace, the evangelical Christian will administer his money and goods as

before the eyes of God, and in gladness give to the work of the Lord according as God has blessed him. Oh, what a stream of gold would flow into God's treasuries if the heart of church people generally were truly purged of the love for mammon and filled with a love for Christ!

Consider what it would mean in the matter of the mighty conflict stirring the Christian Church today. The battle against modernism will never be won by direct attack. Certainly the Christian Church should defend itself and attack error for the strengthening of the faith of believers and for the removal of difficulties in the way of honest doubters; but victories in the sphere of religion are seldom won by argument.

In a sense modernism is at an advantage in such an encounter, for it moves characteristically in the realm

of the natural, and its appeal is to reason. Historic Christianity, on the other hand, adds to the natural the supernatural, a supernatural revelation, a supernatural Christ, a supernatural redemption, a supernatural regeneration, a supernatural human destiny; and its ultimate appeal is to faith rather than to reason.

Before a jury of unregenerate human opinion, therefore, modernism has the advantage; but before the bar of experience of supernatural grace in the heart, historic Christianity stands vindicated, and modernism falls in hopeless ruin.

Without a question, the most effective weapon against modernism, as has been the case with all its anti-Christian predecessors, is a sound and general revival of personal evangelical faith. God grant that it may come before many more precious

souls shall have been caught in the meshes of this seductive system.

Consider what it would mean for the mighty cause of missions. Looking upon all mankind as redeemed by the blood of Jesus and depending solely upon Him for their hope of temporal and eternal salvation, the evangelical Christian burns with a desire to bring or send the wonderful good news to the ends of the earth. He alone has the true spirit of the missionary who has experienced the sweetness of divine grace in his own life.

Consider what it would mean for the advancement of good fellowship thruout the whole world. The movement toward peace among men will go forward just in proportion as human hearts are regenerated, and suspicion and hate are replaced by sympathy and love.

The evangelical program is Christ's program. God hasten the day when men in increasing numbers and increasing measure shall sense the true essence of Christianity, shall bring to the cross their burdens of sin and guilt, and with a new love in their hearts go forth into the busy life of the world gladdening the hearts of the sorrowful, brightening the hopes of the despairing, and bringing men everywhere to see that in the Savior of the world there is an abundant and effective remedy for individual and social ills; for in Him there is fulness of life for evermore.

If the rank and file of the members of the Lutheran Church, which is so evangelical in its theory, could enter into the fulness and power of truly evangelical Christianity in practice, there would open before this great church an avenue to Chris-

tian service such as few bodies of Christians have ever faced. Standing squarely upon the doctrines of an inspired Bible, the deity of Christ, the vicarious atonement, the supernatural regeneration of the human heart by the Holy Spirit, and the obligation to preach Christ as the only Savior to all men everywhere, and with these doctrines embodied in pulsating Christian living, the Lutheran Church of the coming days would find itself in the midst of opportunities for working with God, limited only by its obedience and consecration.

Let us lift up our eyes and get something of Christ's vision of the world's desperate need; let us look into our Bibles and read the truths of the blessed Gospel; let us open our hearts and receive Christ wholeheartedly into our own lives; and then,

with prayer for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, let us, in God's name, move forward, and thru education, missions, and charity bring Christ's message of salvation, love, peace, and hope to an agonizing humanity.

XV

A Glorious Prospect

THE evangelical Christian life is rich and abundant in its content on earth, but it is even more wonderful in its possibilities in the life to come.

The Bible is full of prophecies and promises of the blessedness in store for the faithful. Here are some words of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven." In His farewell discourse with His disciples: "Let not your heart be troub-

led: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

To the repentant robber on the cross: "Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

In the book of Revelation we read these comforting words: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

The wealth of Oriental imagery is exhausted in the prophetic passages

descriptive of the "New Heavens and the New Earth."

"After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing around about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are ar-

rayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they that came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:7-17.)

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and

the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men: and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away" (Rev. 21: 1-4.)

The apostle Paul was privileged beyond others in the revelations given him of the heavenly life. He heard unspeakable words which he was not allowed to utter, but we gather from the manner in which he speaks of his experience that there is something so wonderful in store for the people of God that it transcends

human power to describe or imagine.

No wonder Paul was torn between two desires: "I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

Paul loved life as few men ever did, for life was wonderfully rich to him. Every day was filled with gratitude to God for the wonderful grace granted him; every day offered him limitless opportunities to do good to his fellowmen; every day he lived to the glory of God.

But when he contemplated the wonders of the heavenly life, he was drawn by a great longing for that. So in the crowded "busyness" of his daily life or in the rare moments of contemplation of the life to come he

was alike happy. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

That is why in that "swan song," addressed to Timothy, he could say:

"For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8.)

What a wonderful triumph is this, at the close of a wonderful life!

Friend, do you not covet such a life and such a prospect in the hour of death? Whether you live or die to be the Lord's? Think of it—to live each day in the fellowship of your Savior, bringing to Him your

burden of sin, receiving repeated assurance of forgiveness, drinking of the stream of life that makes you strong to resist evil and to do good, and all the time looking forward to an eternal life with God of wondrous joy and loveliness!

There is nothing finer on earth than, always and everywhere, to be able to say in trusting faith:

"The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, tho I walk thru the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me;

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou anointest my head with oil;

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

This is the way of happiness, and Christ is the key that opens the portal. Dear friend, will you not appropriate this secret of a happy life?